

Mar 14, 2018

Education Committee
CT

Dear Members of the Education Committee, Committee,

As an advocate with Food Allergy Research & Education, I am writing to you to voice my support of HB 5452. The bill addresses important concerns regarding the safety of students, including allowing school transportation personnel to intervene in an allergic emergency, having the state update current school food allergy guidelines, and putting policies in place to keep food allergic students safely participating in culinary programs.

I am writing to share testimony as a member of the Outcomes Research Advisory Board (ORAB) for Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) and as the mother of a son with multiple life-threatening food allergies. At the age of five my son, Adrian, is severely allergic to dairy, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, shellfish, and mustard and he has experienced twelve anaphylactic reactions.

His most recent reaction was just over two weeks ago (on March 1, 2018) and highlights exactly why this bill is essential for individuals like my son. In this particular instance we were out in a public indoor play space and shortly after leaving the facility on the short drive home my son began experiencing symptoms of an allergic reaction which quickly developed into anaphylaxis. While in this instance I (his mother) was the responsible party transporting him, there is an equally like chance that a similar situation could occur during the school day prior to boarding the bus to be transported home.

Food allergies are a serious and growing public health problem with no cure. Fifteen million Americans have food allergies, including nearly 6 million children. In Connecticut, up to 8 percent of children have a food allergy.

Connecticut is among the top five states for food anaphylactic food reactions and food allergy diagnosis insurance claims. Only 30 percent of reporting districts require bus drivers to have training in anaphylaxis and administering epinephrine, and our district (Orange Public School) is not one of them. Even though the district provides transportation for my son through Student Services (to minimize risk of exposure) there is nothing can be done if a reaction occurs while he is on the bus.

Furthermore, current State Department of Education (CSDE) guidelines for students with food allergies were written in 2006, updated in 2012, and are out of date with current medical and legal standards of care.

As an example, CSDE guidelines do not acknowledge food allergies may be considered a disability under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For these reasons, I ask you to bring HB 5452 to a vote and vote YES.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

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